



Dispute Resolution Services

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Residential Tenancy Branch
Office of Housing and Construction Standards

DECISION

Dispute Codes MNSD, MNDC, FF

Introduction

This is an application by the tenant filed under the Residential Tenancy Act (the “Act”) for a monetary order for return of double the security deposit and the filing fee for the claim.

Both parties appeared, gave affirmed testimony, and were provided the opportunity to present their evidence orally and in written and documentary form, and to cross-examine the other party, and make submissions at the hearing.

The parties confirmed receipt of all evidence submissions and there were no disputes in relation to review of the evidence submissions

I have reviewed all evidence and testimony before me that met the requirements of the rules of procedure. I refer only to the relevant facts and issues in this decision.

Issue to be Decided

Is the tenant entitled to a monetary order for return of double the security deposit?

Background and Evidence

The tenancy began on July 1, 2012. Rent in the amount of \$1,000.00 was payable on the first of each month. A security deposit of \$500.00 was paid by the tenant. The tenancy ended on August 31, 2014.

The tenant testified that they provided the landlord with a written notice of the forwarding address on August 31, 2014, when they returned the keys to the landlord.

The tenant testified that they received a cheque from the landlord in the amount of \$55.07. The tenant stated that they did not give the landlord permission to retain the amount of \$444.93 from the security deposit.

The landlord’s agent acknowledged that they had the tenant’s forwarding addresses. The agent stated that they had to hire a cleaner to clean the premises, as they do not believe the unit was left reasonably clean and deducted this amount from the tenant’s security deposit.

The landlord's agent acknowledged that they did not make an application claiming against the security deposit.

Analysis

Based on the above, the testimony and evidence, and on a balance of probabilities, I find as follows:

Return of security deposit and pet damage deposit is defined in Part 2 of the Act.

Return of security deposit and pet damage deposit

38 (1) Except as provided in subsection (3) or (4) (a), **within 15 days after the later of**

(a) the date the tenancy ends, and

(b) the date the landlord receives the tenant's forwarding address in writing,

the landlord **must do one of the following:**

(c) repay, as provided in subsection (8), any security deposit or pet damage deposit to the tenant with interest calculated in accordance with the regulations;

(d) make an application for dispute resolution claiming against the security deposit or pet damage deposit.

...

(4) A landlord may retain an amount from a security deposit or a pet damage deposit if,

(a) at the end of a tenancy, the tenant agrees in writing the landlord may retain the amount to pay a liability or obligation of the tenant, or

(b) after the end of the tenancy, the director orders that the landlord may retain the amount.

(6) If a landlord does not comply with subsection (1), the landlord

(a) may not make a claim against the security deposit or any pet damage deposit, and

(b) must pay the tenant double the amount of the security deposit, pet damage deposit, or both, as applicable.

In this case, the landlord did not apply for arbitration, within 15 days of the end of the tenancy or receipt of the forwarding address, which was given on August 31, 2014.

Although the landlord returned the amount of \$55.07, the landlord did not have the consent of the tenant to deduct the amount of \$444.93 from the security deposit. The security deposit is held in trust for the tenant by the landlord. At no time does the landlord have the ability to simply deduct amounts from the security deposit because they feel they are entitled to it or are justified to keep it, as was in this case.

The landlord may only keep all or a portion of the security deposit through the authority of the Act, such as an order from an Arbitrator. Here the landlord did not have any authority under the Act to keep any portion of the security deposit. Therefore, I find the landlord has breached 38(1) of the Act.

Section 38(6) provides that if a landlord does not comply with section 38(1), the landlord must pay the tenant double the amount of the security deposit. The legislation does not provide any flexibility on this issue.

Therefore, I must order, pursuant to section 38 of the Act, that the landlord pay the tenant the sum of **\$994.93**, comprised of double the security deposit (\$500.00) on the original amount held, and the cost to recover the filing fee of \$50.00. This amount is reduced by the amount of \$55.07, which was previously returned to the tenant.

The tenant is given a formal monetary order pursuant to 67 of the Act, in the above terms and the landlord must be served with a copy of this order as soon as possible. Should the landlord fail to comply with this order, the order may be filed in the small claims division of the Provincial Court and enforced as an order of that court.

Conclusion

The tenant's application for return of double the security deposit is granted. The tenant is granted a monetary order in the above noted amount.

This decision is made on authority delegated to me by the Director of the Residential Tenancy Branch under Section 9.1(1) of the *Residential Tenancy Act*.

Dated: May 28, 2015

Residential Tenancy Branch

